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Educational Writings

REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

The project method in teacher-training.—Recent interest in and discussion of the project or problem method of instruction have stimulated many teachers to utilize the suggestions of others or to devise original schemes of the project type for improving both the content of the courses they give and their own technique of teaching. These revisions of curriculum and method have been made in the interest of the pupils and in recognition of the fact that “the laws of learning best function through the utilization of a purposeful activity.” With a view to relating more directly the requirements of the course to the real problems and the felt needs of the students, one supervisor of classes for teachers of vocational agriculture has organized a series of projects which are made the basis of instruction in both the content and the methods of teaching this subject. The results of some years’ experience under this plan are embodied in a textbook¹ designed for use in teacher-training institutions.

The point of view which has guided the author in developing his teacher-training plan in this unusual fashion is revealed in the following statement of his conception of the task confronting the teacher of vocational agriculture.

It is not the function of the school to attempt to show the specialist how to improve upon his work, but it is the function of the school to teach the average farm boy the scientific principles underlying the field of agriculture; to teach him the fundamentals of the supplemental subjects that he will need in his everyday activities; to teach him to do the practical work; to teach him to keep business records of his enterprises; and to give him the training and desire to be a leader in the community.

The project method above all other methods so far tried out in teaching vocational agriculture, when properly presented, develops greater interest and more initiative. It gives the pupil “stick-to-it-ive-ness” to carry his undertaking to completion. It provides a basis for reasoning and offers adequate opportunity for direct thinking to a logical conclusion [p. 12].

After a brief discussion of the development of agricultural education from early times to the present practice as influenced by the Smith-Hughes Act, the author explains the nature and advantages of the “home project” and outlines the conditions under which the project should be planned and carried to completion by both the teacher in training and the student in high school. Special emphasis is placed upon the importance of making the project a business

¹ SAMUEL H. DADISMAN, *Methods of Teaching Vocational Agriculture*. Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1921. Pp. 142.

enterprise. To this end, it is urged that the undertaking be of worth-while size and importance, that a written contract be executed by pupil, parent, and teacher, that the work continue for at least six months, and that complete records of hours of labor, expenses, income, and profits be kept. Specific suggestions concerning the relating of the instruction in school to the work on the project and the supervising of the home work are included. Lesson plans and methods of conducting field trips are treated in a somewhat detailed manner, specific examples being described in each case.

In presenting outlines of four years of work in agriculture for students of secondary grade, the author points out many problems which are likely to arise in organizing the projects for a group of pupils and explains the steps that should be taken in leading the pupil to a final decision with reference to his undertaking. The first year's work is concerned with plant life, dealing with problems pertaining to the preparation of the soil and the seed, the cultivation of the growing plant, protection of plants against insects, diseases, and weeds, and the management of harvesting and marketing. The second year's work is also general in character and deals with animal life. In the third and fourth years the pupils are given opportunities for making more extensive studies along the lines of their special interests and for dealing with the managerial phase of farming. A separate chapter presents some practical considerations in connection with farm mechanics. The general principles which should be mastered by the pupil are outlined, and specific projects are suggested. It is the aim of this course to prepare the student to do the ordinary repair work of the machinery used in connection with his farm activities.

In the final chapter on "The Future of Agricultural Education" the author contends that practical farm experience should be a requirement of those who become teachers of agriculture. For those who have not had sufficient successful experience, it is urged that they be required to conduct an animal or a plant project in connection with their training as the best means of preparing them for effective service in supervising similar activities on the part of their future pupils.

The book seems to meet adequately the demands of a text for students in training for positions as teachers of agriculture in schools of secondary grade. It should also prove a valuable handbook for those already engaged in such teaching.

N. B. HENRY

A state school survey.—One of the most significant developments of the school-survey movement is that of the state survey. The state is the unit of educational authority and, in order to proceed constructively in the organization and administration of the whole public school system, needs accurate and reliable information as to the efficiency of the various types of schools and of the various lines of work offered in the courses of study. The securing of such reliable data on a state-wide scale has been made possible through the